

## Sudan presses US special envoy on lifting sanctions

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December 15, 2009 (KHARTOUM) – The US special envoy to Sudan General Scott Gration met with a number of officials here who urged his government to ease the decade long unilateral sanctions imposed stressing that they are no longer justified.

The Sudanese finance and national economy minister Awad Al-Jaz told Gration that debt relief is one of the peace deliverables and part of the Oslo donors' conference obligations adding that Sudan has made substantial efforts in improving economic growth as shown in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports.

Al-Jaz stressed that Sudan is working on sustainable and balanced development as well putting efforts to bring peace to the war ravaged region of Darfur.

The Sudanese official said that the current stability in Darfur is an opportunity for resolving the country's problem and inaugurating more development projects. His deputy Lual Deng said that debt relief allows for the allocation of more resources to be spent elsewhere.



*File - US special envoy to Sudan General Scott Gration (AP)*

The most recent IMF report estimates Sudan's debt to have grown to about \$34 billion due to a "further buildup of arrears to Paris Club and non-Paris Club creditors....and new drawings from Arab multilateral and bilateral creditors, as well as from China and India".

Sudan informed the IMF that it in light of Sudan's difficult foreign exchange position their debt repayments to the fund will be at \$10 million for 2009 compared to a total of \$50 million in 2007 & 2008.

The general manager of Sudan's national airways company (Sudan Air), Al-Obeid Fadl Al-Moula, has disclosed that there are ongoing talks with some US companies, whom he declined to name, in order to hold a meeting next January to discuss lifting US economic sanctions on the aviation sector in Sudan.

Al-Moula further said that recent talks with Gration had touched on the issue of lifting US sanctions on the aviation sector, pointing out that a committee had been formed to discuss the issue with US companies operating in the field of spare parts for aircrafts.

Khartoum has frequently complained that its poor record in air safety is largely due to lack of spare parts for its aircrafts.

However, the US state department refuted this allegation, pointing out that the sanctions include an exemption on spare parts for civilian airliners.

Separately Graton today has welcomed a deal between former civil war enemies in north and south Sudan over national elections and a southern referendum on independence, but warned that more work still needs to be done.

"We are very impressed with the political will, demonstrating the leadership that we wanted to see", he told Agence France Presse (AFP) in an interview in the capital of the semi-autonomous south.

"Implementation is of course key, and we will be working with both parties to ensure that" he added.

The relations between the two partners in the government of national unity reached a low point following protests held this month that included a coalition of Northern opposition parties along with the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM):

The Sudanese authorities banned the protest the day before and deployed police to the streets to curb the demonstrations arresting a handful of SPLM senior figures.

The US condemned the crackdown and called on Sudan to allow peaceful freedom of expression without intimidation to allow for a conducive environment to hold the elections.

The tension appeared to have been defused over the weekend after both parties reached a partial agreement on a package of democratic reforms bills ahead of next April's elections and on a procedural law for the south's referendum scheduled for January 2011.

Graton said preparations must be made ahead of the independence referendum for the south, slated for January 2011.

"There is a lot more work that needs to be done; post referendum issues also have to be decided," he said.

"There are issues in terms of sharing of resources, of oil revenues, grazing and of water rights: these are issues we will be involved with in the next couple of months to ensure that the CPA is implemented fully".

Graton also commended the "excellent" results of the registration period for elections in November, noting that more than 15 million people signed up to vote in the April 2010 ballot, the first in 24 years.

Some political powers also pointed fingers at the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) alleging widespread fraud in the registration process.

"There are things that have to be corrected, there are lessons that we learned, but this experience of registration for elections exceeded our expectations", said Graton.

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